

"Dumb and Much Dumber." It was dumb to shut the Government down for a month, but it would be much dumber to default on the national debt.

Yesterday Moody's, the world-renowned bond rater, put \$400 billion of U.S. securities on the credit watch list, and Moody's has reason to worry. Many in this House, exhibiting a combination of arrogance and ignorance, a dangerous combination, want to allow us to default, in the vain hope it will bring a budget agreement. Not in the 220 years of our country's existence has America's credit rating ever been downgraded from triple A.

Some in the Republican Party are playing with fire, and if they are not careful we will all get burned. The Speaker is dancing on the edge of a fiscal abyss.

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He may go down and take all of us with him if he does not stand up to the extremists in his own party.

Mr. Speaker, a month ago I would have said not even this Congress would be stupid enough to default on the debt. Today I am not so sure, because the inmates in a real sense, are running this asylum.

AVOCADO IMPORTATION

(Mr. CALVERT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. CALVERT. Mr. Speaker, it would seem Secretary of Agriculture Dan Glickman is on a one-man crusade to destroy California's multibillion-dollar fruit and vegetable industry.

That is exactly what will happen if he allows the importation of Mexican avocados. These avocados will bring fruit flies, seed weevils, stem borers, and other pests that will destroy California's economy.

"Not to worry," says Secretary Glickman, "we have used good science."

That is not true.

An independent report by University of California Riverside, Cornell University, Boston University, and Oregon State University states that "there is no rational basis for USDA's estimate of risk." The importation of Mexican avocados could mean catastrophe for California.

The introduction of these pests will destroy our oranges, our avocados, and our grapes. Not for one season, but for a generation. This is bad public policy, based on bad science. Do not ruin California's economy.

Mr. Secretary, institute a credible peer review process, now.

CONGRESS MUST BE RESPONSIBLE ON BUDGET

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, this is no time to gloat, even though the Republicans raised \$16 million at a fundraiser last night. I think it is time to listen to the President's message. We should never, never, never shut the Government down again.

But if we do not pass a new debt ceiling limit, I will tell you what we will do. We will not be able to pay Social Security payments on March 1. We will not be able to pay veterans benefits on March 1. And, yes, we will not be able to pay our troops in Bosnia on March 1.

How outrageous. Wall Street is trembling. Six former Secretaries of the Treasury said this is outrageous that we would bring a government, a nation, to its knees.

Congress, wake up, stand up, and work together. Pass a new debt ceiling limit and be responsible to the American people. This is no time to play with our lives and jeopardize the lives and the hopes and dreams of our seniors, our veterans, and our men and women laying their lives on the line in Bosnia.

ERA OF BIG GOVERNMENT OVER?

(Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. BARTLETT of Maryland. Mr. Speaker, no one gives an upbeat speech better than our President. Analyst Kevin Phillips described the President as a chameleon because of his extraordinary ability to deliver a conservative message that masks his liberal government agenda.

For instance, in his State of the Union Message, our President twice told Americans that the era of big government is over.

However, in the same State of the Union Message, the President twice told Americans that we cannot fend for ourselves.

Which is it, Mr. President?

Liberals believe that Americans can't fend for ourselves. That's why liberals built up the monstrous Federal Government in Washington over the last 30 years.

Americans want the Government off our backs.

Mr. Speaker, if the President is really serious about ending the era of big government, why did he propose to expand or create no less than six new Federal Government programs in his State of the Union?

Actions speak louder than words.

LIMITING INCREASE IN MARKETABLE DEBT

(Mr. SMITH of Michigan asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SMITH of Michigan. Mr. Speaker, I am introducing a bill this morning that I would invite all Members to cosign with me. It is a bill that says

there shall be no increase in net marketable debt after December 31, 2001.

Mr. Speaker, both sides of this issue on how we reach a balanced budget have agreed to have a balanced budget and not have an increase in debt. I think when you analyze the President's budget though, we need to remember two figures: \$300 billion and \$200 billion. The President's budget proposal for balance has \$300 billion more spending than the Republican proposal. It has \$200 billion more taxes than the Republican proposal.

Mr. Speaker, if one wants to continue to tax and spend, then it is OK to go with the President's proposal. The Republicans cannot accept that if we give a hang about what happens to our kids and grandkids. Let us at least agree on the final line, the final resolution, to not increase net marketable debt after the year 2001.

"DON'T LET ME HAVE TO TELL YOU TWICE"

(Ms. NORTON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. NORTON. Mr. Speaker, my mother always said, "Do not let me have to tell you twice."

We heard you, Moody's. We do not need to hear from Standard & Poor's, too. We need to respond that we are not the kamikaze Congress. The markets actually responded positively all during our tortured balanced budget negotiations. There were Dow Jones records broken. The reason, of course, is that they expected a balanced budget. A more balanced budget compromise would have the same effect, only this time the benefits would not be only to the markets, but also to jobs, to renewed confidence in our economy, and especially in much needed renewed confidence in the Congress of the United States.

WHAT THE DEBATE IS ABOUT

(Mr. WALKER asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. WALKER. Mr. Speaker, any time you hear Members come to the floor advocating the President's balanced budget, you need to understand what that means. The fact is the President did as he was requested to do. He came in with a balanced budget that does meet balance in 7 years. The problem is that it always reflects his sense of priorities, and in that balanced budget the President has told us he wants to spend more, he wants to tax more, he wants bigger government, not less government, and that is what the debate is about. It is not whether or not you get to balance; it is how you get there and what you are doing, what are the programs and the priorities that you espouse.

The programs and the priorities espoused by President Clinton lead us to